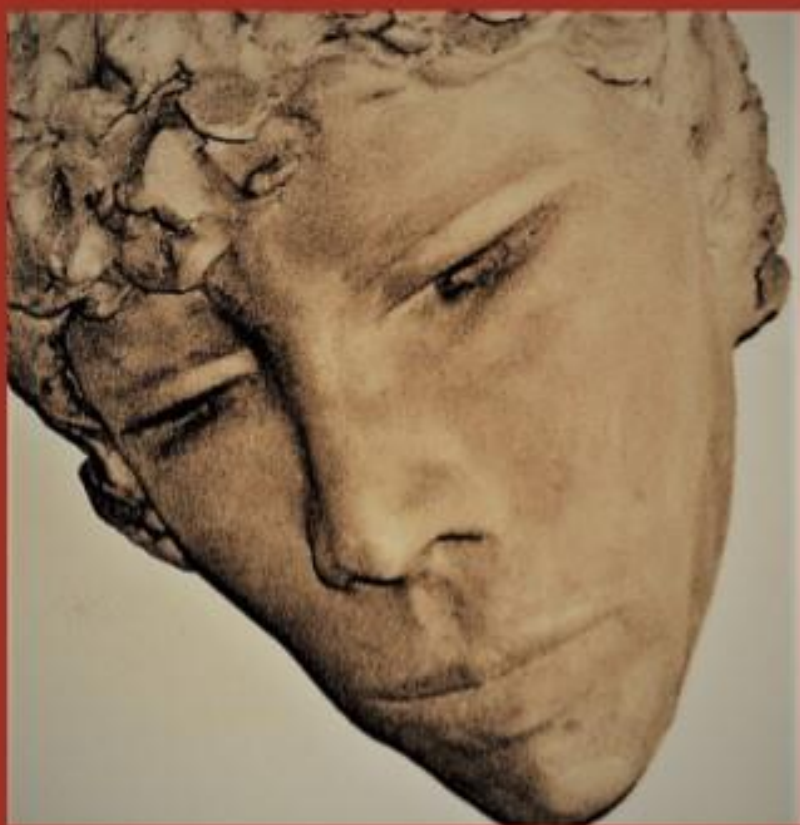


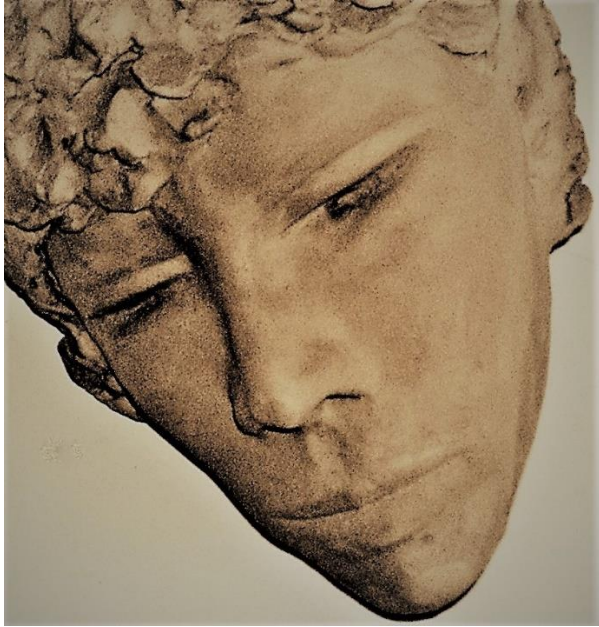
If I Knew This Haunting

The poetry of Allison Grayhurst



Allison Grayhurst

If I Knew This Haunting



Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

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The Poetry of Allison Grayhurst
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First addition
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Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data
Grayhurst, Allison, 1966-
If I Knew This Haunting**

**“Edge Unlimited Publishing”
Poems.
ISBN-13: 9781082365133
ISBN-10: 1082365130**

**If I Knew This Haunting
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Title ID:**

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A Glimpse

Caesar

**If I am going to speak of you, I want
to speak of you properly.**

**You were not a man fueled
solely by personal ambition, but had
a drawing-in blackhole endless taking,
sucking-in-energy latched tight to your soul.**

**You also had
a throbbing outward force
of inexhaustible restlessness
fused with your being. You had
fortune emboldened at your side.**

**You risked all for all-or-nothing in countless campaigns,
taut with a certainty no person should have to bear.**

**You did deeds no peer had
the courage or genius to execute, and standing still
in victory, you never rested but moved to the next goal
as swiftly as you conquered the last.**

*If you loved God that way instead of war
you would have been more than you were –
more than the high priest of Rome or a king amongst kings.
If you came at the time of Jesus, knew Jesus,
Jesus would have satiated that terrible internal void,
plugged it, infused it with his light -
then you would have known peace
and your urgent voracity for power
would have been settled, stilled.*

**But as it were, living before Christ
you knew compassion,
were hated for your compassion,
by your own army and your enemy's.
You offered clemency more than you punished.
All were held captive by your generosity
as much as they were by your fierceness.
You maimed their pride with your kindness, deliberately,
those nobles, senators, those rulers locked in the grinding
wheel of rotating nullifying traditions. You stood outside
of your society, no patience to give attention
to their useless squabbles of self-important entitlement,
their togas of whitewashed
formality, their ass-burns for sitting so long
in debate, on the concrete horizontal plains
of arrested progress.**

**They needed you more than you needed them.
They needed your violent push, your confident disregard
for all they held as fact, sacred and forever-lasting.
Your ego was strong,
a compulsive force of relentless potency, but
your dignity was stronger.
They foiled your many attempts to make peace.
You were isolated because you felt yourself superior
burdened with an innate drive
that surpassed all of those that stood before you,
and those that came before you too.**

**Antony was nothing beside you, nor Crassus, Pompey,
Cato, Sulla, Servilia or even Cicero,
(though you envied Cicero his literary talent as you also
wrote books, and even poetry).**

**But Caesar, did any one love you?
They feared, admired, hated and worshiped you,
but did they love you? I think your first wife did,
and your daughter with her, Julia,
and Cleopatra - she loved you - saw herself kindred
to a man of unsurpassed charm and authority.
She too was brilliant, ruthless and magnetic and not
the great pigeonholed beauty history claims.
The two of you together went too far.
With her, you lost your isolation and gained equality.
With her, you also lost your balance.
You became too much.**

**The senate fed your fate,
created monuments and celebrations
in your honour. While you stayed in Rome,
smothered by their demands,
you organized time, created the Calendar
and planned your next siege.**

**It has been told that you were a great lover of both sexes.
That your mere presence, cheerfulness and choice words
inspired armies to win when defeat was deemed inevitable.
You gave your soldiers the autonomy to choose you,
and they always chose you.**

Over dinner, the night before you were murdered
the senators asked you
“what would be the best kind of death?”
and you said “quick, unexpected”
They gathered around you, 23 of them,
each taking a vicious plunge,
thinking they could backtrack, mend
what you dismantled, when instead
their calculated betrayal destroyed the Republic
they wanted to preserve. And for you,

they furnished the stage of your last act,
marked even more immortal by Shakespeare,
brought to its apex by your protege Brutus.
Bleeding and overpowered,
you covered your head with your cloak, knowing
the oracle was right.
You, ancestor of Venus – died
one of the most remembered deaths in history, died
a death befitting your life, claiming your place
on par with the ancient gods.

If I am going to speak of him I want
to speak of him properly.

This sometimes-tyrant,
this namesake of July and a comet,
this forger of the clip-clawed Libra constellation,
was like an inedible mark,
a perfect creature aligned
with inner and celestial interlocking geometry.
His impatience and discipline
grew parallel, equal in calibre within him.
In him there was nothing lethargic,
no detrimental indulgences
and nothing chaotic.

Crossing the Rubicon, always forward moving,
daring, leaping outside the lines
afraid more of failure than of death,
he stayed the path, never compromising,
humbled only by the voice
that stormed triumphant in his head.

*The voice, when waking
he never spoke about, but when sleeping,
gripped him, strained, strengthening his zeal,
igniting a landmark pure devotion.*

He was made for that point in time and space,
to enact that exact mythology, a destiny
etched like a laurel wreath into the skin around
a zenith fixed star.

A Glimpse

**There was a glimpse
of a sunrise, a dazzling ending
and wild grass, lush and life-filled
to walk towards, into, barefoot and perfect
as God's grace is perfect, reducing the darkness
unnameable and innocence, reclaimed.**

**There was a moment
when I could see like a prophet sees
or a sorcerer, flexing joy in dimensional
vividness, dilated, stripped of
my armour, tension and dread.**

**Army on a hill, hungering for the water flowing
downstream. Woman on a ship, surrounded
by the sea with a kicking babe in her expanded belly.
Is there land? Is it heaven or just a dream?**

**If I risk, I risk it all
with nothing to risk it for in sight.
If I stay, I am a drowned clover,
no different than the meat-eaters,
the non-shapeshifters and the drones.**

**What do I say to the arrested vision,
the backward plucking?
I had a glimpse, a gift**

of jewels overflowing.
Am I mad, believing? I think I am,
trapped in this curse – hours upon years
chipping at the granite with my teeth, pushing
my way through with no end in sight, damaging
the sack around my heart,
relentlessly fulfilling my duty.

There was a glimpse,
something of God in a ghost-filled place.

Someone tells me to believe that this darkness
is ending, that the gamble is launched
and victory is already
in my hands.

If I could astral-project, I would go
to that place I glimpsed, just to be sure it was there.
If I could be more than I am, I could find peace
in the corner of this prison cell.

The birds say one thing, and my body another.

The glimpse was here and it was hope.
I will not deny its existence.
I will not fight its wound or its expectation,
but surrendering to my limitations,
into the wet earth,
I will give way, pacified.

Words

I

The words came
and killed the hostages,
killed the ghosts stuck
in crevices of crow's feet eyes
and in the long book of regrets and what ifs.

The words came and said:
the greatest indication
of spiritual immaturity
is the lack of gratitude.

The words were singular, pounded their plurality
into one soft mass, or like pieces of glass
heated, liquified, blending smoothly
the dangerous edges.

The words came as two hawks hovering
in surreal stillness and then came again
in the small measles-scar of someone I knew
as a child, seen again as an adult, flooding me
with a memory and an affirmation

that the spaces between
this time and that time
do not exist, not as a ladder, not as fossil bones
but those spaces somehow existing, contain
the intrinsic value of eternity.

II

The words came
and were excellent company – said:

hear the melody while joining with each note,
be absorbed into its specific portrait.

The words said: pause,
brought me into the sun rising over the field,
out of the dark forest that was covered with bramble
and dead rooted trees.

I found a way out, I held a hand, briefly,
but long enough to be healed.
I saw the old cat smiling on the mat,
the old dog as happy
as he was when he was young,
a house embroidered with the harmony
that comes after journeying
through the trapped corridors of hell.

III

I am on horseback with my chestnut-red friend,
galloping near the round edge, certain of our flight -
both of us embodying a perpetual exhilaration,

and where, where are we going? so fast?
so in tune? - no words now -
just a sweet-nectar symbiotic flow.

Call these words a dream. Call them bohemian.
Back away. Throw the stone. Seal them.

All bars and walls are purgatory-spent,
blown over
(*lick your lips, let the spider live*)

blow it over, behind.

Slipping off the Side

Never holding, always holding
up, down, back
past the white-light knockout strike,
the broken dishes, the failed vision.
Always guilt as agency – sweet sun
out of reach, when reached, just a hot huge
stone that must be released. Watching the reptilian
garden diggers, the small-soul claim joy in evil,
sit on the hay stack, seeding its throne
and start a royal lineage.

Entire bloodlines behind bars - Children hated.
I see the same name on all my friends' faces.
My insides have become strewed.
I have only a guiding breath breeze in
a state of blindness, dialectics, repetitions
saying "Do not be attached". Out of the box
then back in again.

I would make a casserole if I knew how.
I would connect everyone
with a wink if the power was mine, if the cracking
double-take shame would release me -
moult and moult until it was small, easy enough to crush
and smear on the pavement.
I have shed these chains twice, maybe more,
maybe their returning power is just an illusion,
a phantom captivity.

When I was in the blue room with an entrance to the attic,
entities ripped into my skull when I slept,
channelling their destructive vocations.
I prayed on the forest floor and burned pages and pages
of long-hand. That was when
I stopped swimming and learned how to ride horses, before
I almost joined a neighbourhood,
whizzed past neighbours on a bike, leaving a mark.
I wish I was caught in the loop of simple competition,
knew my place at the starting line,
claiming trophies at the finish line,
climbing tall chunky trees in the summer or
racing up and down fire escapes for the fun of it.

A Journey in Four Parts

Part One - Acceptance of Realty

(facing the unmovable block)

This is the branch that holds you

**Precision and discipline
are the two things needed to win.
Win what? A war. A deadline. Victory
in a failing dream.**

**Blend the monotone flame,
build it up to fruition so it consumes
the skin, and then the liver and kidneys within.
Stay the course in spite of the flame,
in spite of feeling divinely betrayed.**

**Summer is not for you. Nor is fainting,
or fading, devoured by futility.
Bite the salt cube, be a door not a wheel.
Take what is shattered, glue a mosaic garden,
a place the rain can settle, and after it settles, shine.**

**Borrow nothing. Depend on only yourself
to be your own ambassador, mentor, fan.
Stand without dripping. Keep your hands
clean of self-pity, unstained and soft
as when you were first born.**

**It is a train ride, stopping at many
dilapidated stations.
A long time ago you had medals, owned a crown.
It never brought you peace.**

**If you are fragrant,
if you are foul-
it doesn't matter.
Humble yourself to the journey,
let the corpses bloat themselves, feeding
on the putrid elements of greed and anger.**

**Do what you do best: March,
serve and sometimes sing, finding comfort
in a foot-soldier's rudimentary song.**

(held tighter by the tentacles of hell)

Snip the Seams

**Snip the cord
Snip the line**

**Denial is suffering
under the veil of false
understanding.
The wound is the womb,
the low-road and the high shore-line.**

**Snip all means of flight,
all laws and inhibitions.**

**Shapes made are never final,
words too, alter meaning.
Look and snip
the draining pipe, the solid memory.
The way you were sure was open
but never was, snip
and be done with it.**

**Why the painter who cannot paint, hot days
in global-warming winter,
the bird bath with a hole?**

**Scissor-queen, wire-cutter machine, bow
to the bitter land before you, make peace
with the locking tide. Snip**

**the pictures from the walls,
the broken limb from the rest of the body.
Try it on. Wear it before a mirror, into a crowd.
Pass over the keys.**

**Take tomorrow, hold tomorrow now
and snip.**

Part Two – Interlude

(maybe Yes)

Smelling the Salted Air

**When I fell
I was half-metal, half-mush.
The blood spilled would have killed
another, but I was blessed with
resilience and the head-down-ploughing-through.**

**When I was down there on the hard oblivion dirt,
I wished my anguish would have devoured me,
that somehow I would stop with dutiful tasks
and allow my mind to reach insanity's pinnacle.**

**But I kept going, moving my limbs – first fingers,
then forearm, searching for scraps, nourishment
in the garbage heap I fell on.**

**No one came to carry me home
to their bed of fine linen and clean water. No miracle
lifted me from that impassable barrier, but I moved through,
I don't even know how, alone and broken,
my arteries split, my mind lost in the bardo-realm.**

**Finally, strong-kneed, healing, a small
cavity within is opening, filling with hope.
I know myself in this fiery affirming pulse,
know that freedom from the fall
and freedom from the shackles
that encumbered me to stumble and fall
is my only chance for grain.**

If I climb back up that ridge, allow myself
to be chained – the next time down
will be my last.

Now that I am up, walking and free, I see
behind me soot and murder – impersonal and brutal
just because.

Ahead, I can make it, make myself a ship
to weather any wave.

Ahead, I can keep myself open, love deeply.
I can be tender, build furniture in the sunlight
or just run with the running water,
up or down stream.

Part Three – Commitment to the Impossible

(ripping off the rooftop, chipping at the floor)

Wake!

**Travel with the donkey
to the place where your
thirst is quenched.
Look into the eyes of a farm cow
and tell her stories of glory.
Leave all your wounds in an unmarked grave.**

**Those wounds only put weight on your back,
around your belly.
They are not symbols of your grandeur,
but only fed your self-pity, tying you to
a moaning sorrow.**

**Walk out the door and wake.
Ring the meditation-bowl bell.
Don't resist your freedom or sabotage
the foreclosure of the haunted warehouse
where you spent many years alone trying to slay
the undecipherable.**

**It was never a church nor is it even worthy
of a keepsake box of collected hardships like the hardship**

**when your children moved through serious illness
and you moved with them, holding out to, onto
the angels surrounding.**

**This has no life-pulse. Its pain
never brought you closer to God.
It is waste, decay - don't drag any part of it with you
as you move forward into a complete tomorrow.**

**It formed its own geography within, its own army
of ruthless intent, pitted against your joy.
Dislodge that piece of land from the rest of yourself
like a useless limb to sever.**

**The sun is opening. It has opened.
Accept your good health and wake.
Your left hand is now a flower.**

(it is a decision, mutually yours and God's)

I Take In

**I take in the fire,
the light of dreams,
take it into my core
to swish around
and build movement, a whirlpool
energy expanding, patching
broken roots on the way, manipulating
days of service to grow a tree
that will sustain long after the forest floor sinks
into the sea.**

**I take reality and strip it of its elected principals,
reform its origins to reveal miracles,
downpours of fixed definitions dissolving into
a running stream.**

**I take the pen and make corrections,
here and here until all truths co-related to the truth
within me, until I have no employment but to follow
the dictates of the divine, and know this power
as I know my own gait, my lover's touch,
the smiles of my children.**

**I take the chaos of circumstance and make a string
to guide my way through, hold and follow -
one string, one line, golden, formed,
unbreakable as a covenant bond.**

Part Four – The Light is Found

(everything belongs to God)

Green Patches on Open Ground

**Bow down and accept
the particle blue,
the strength of the beating sun.**

**In the flame you were born,
keep it alive, as pure as
squeezed lemon juice, as precious
as water in the holy grail.**

**Wherever you go, the miracle
is in the listening, in steamrolling
resentments, bitterness and the weight of time.**

**If you must go back, then trust
what binds you to life is stronger and will prevail.
Surrender to the secret. In a second, tumbledown,
join a choir and let your song be layered.**

**Honey drips from the windowsill.
Collect it in jars and feast. God is great
and only what is connected to God
can know greatness.
Re-embrace the purity of truth and be delivered.
Renew your sacred vows, let the vowels join the consonants
and form words. Cloud. Peach. Clean.
Be filled with your personal seraphim's blood.
Get behind the line and follow.**

**This house is an eagle stretching her wings
over her young. It is holy and it is alive.
Your blessings are not meagre,
but monumental as a babe's first breath,
as yes&no combined.**

**You have been retrieved from the dumpster,
many are not -
but are left in a crusting-over broken shell, infested
with insects and slowly-devouring disease.**

**Yourself, once a fallen workhorse,
now unbridled, set free - wild and roaming, racing
neck-to-neck with kin, flooded with pure-power instinct,
at one with the wind, the hills, places to graze.**

Pendulum

Bulb Flower

**The far and withered bulb flower
I planted when I was a child,
long ago shaken by years of wind
and rotted to its core –
now that it has all but disappeared
even as a crust upon the Earth,
has it found shape again in something living,
or backtracked to the volcano heart
of a mythical land?**

**Does it sigh for the sun or cry
when it hears a frog's slow croak?
Does it do as I do now, watch
rain fall on stones, or is it part of a low-creepy thing
that lacks shadow and intent?**

**Does it sleep in the moss or
is it clay for a sculptor's hungry hands?
Does it float through the seas as a jellyfish
or hop the meadows wild?**

**The far and withered blub flower
I planted when I was a child,
maybe today I saw it again
in the squirrel crossing the street
or maybe in that great tomato that was
my lunch, it returned
to now nourish my grown-up bones.**

Face to Face

We rise to deliver
our final wounds.

I hang from an inward thread,
frayed by storm. You
sit in your chair, plastered
with brittle privacy.

Neither of us moves to warm the air.
The floor between turns to quicksand
with a thick layer of hovering mosquitoes above.
Anger with a voice too tight to speak
takes the form of ant-like apparitions, covering
our four-corned walls.

It will be done. We will be bone
and nothing else when this is through.
It will not matter,
the scent of our first or final kiss
for the proud demon-martyrs
embracing our ribs,
taking seat on our laps
have all but swallowed us whole,
conquered.

Even Though

Even attempting to climb the perilous cliff,
I am not afraid of falling.
The sensual rhythms of this lonely morning
devour me, reconciled
to my private chamber, suspended.

Far under the cliff, the gulls
are united with the ocean, as that
deep blue speckled-white
beckons me to its bed.

Wolves and warriors are rooted to the hunt.
I am rooted to this risk, edge-clinging,
fated to ultimately rest
in the body of a miracle.

There are miles below and miles above,
awakening sounds of insects burrowing,
of swallows nest-emerging -
a holy vapour all around that fills
the void with necessity.

Out of Dreams

Like clay brick eroded
by rain, thoughts sear
my better part, calling me
to the altar, to kneel and
discipline these fantastical wanderings.

Like an egg yolk pierced, I spill
my substance flat across the frying pan.

I live in the time just before dawn.
I curse the crocodile but praise
its authority. The clock strikes seven
and I have lost my sparrow for good.
I have waited for the change, wished myself more
than this life, making a remedy from imagination.

I will walk the straight line as an experiment, walk
to feel like a buttercup flower tied to the forest floor -
satisfied with its display of tiny splendor, at peace
with its place amongst the aged trees.

Daughter of the Streets

She has no
light but that
of effervescent clouds.

She has her days
in doorways, sleeping
on abandoned stairs,
folding her arms
in laughter.

She has a man in her mind,
but cannot remember his
name, cannot bear the cold
stares of animals who watch
from distant trees.

She has many dimensions
in her bones and in her pain,
has not reached her final year
though time has lost its pace
in her blood, though fire and milk
leave her with equal indifference,
and her memory is an ancient tongue
in need of translation.

Once and Forever

Love pulls the ghost into being,
the burnt-heart into the shade
and comforts and forgives and bears
all wounds with blinding devotion
to transform.

Love is the ledge
where the starling sits, praising
the twilight's fall.

Love is the enemy unmasked
of its endless destruction, the topless
flowers that sound no blame into
the wind.

Love has no ruin, but hails and
hails to every heart,
delivering.

You Shaped My Song, Then Left

**Voyaging down beside the worms
through the abscess of earth to hold
a gem stone sinking.**

**My roots have been seized
by their rival the wind,
unable to alter the atmosphere.**

**My love leans between
opposing worlds, wanting
to erect hope where hope
can no longer sustain.**

**This place of uncommon intensity,
a place a little closer to the window
where my thoughts can rest on only
the setting sun and you.**

Kitten

Cut glass on flesh.

Claws extended,
playfully
mean, pouncing
with dagger intent.
Ears folded, and then

the sweet distance
from leg to shoulder, tiny muscles
stretched, releasing a miracle purr.

Nose, nuzzling my hair
licking with love every
red knotted strand.

Head, light as a penny, nods,
slips away into sleep,
elemental.

Heavy As Any Ache

We cannot
hang in the grip of this cloud
for long. The waste
of bad habits, concealing
kindness with a show
of wit. Sarcasm as fatal
as a cut throat or plain as
a child's cry.
Hearts stuffed with
hollow match-stick crimes.

Counter clockwise the sun spins. The moon
climbs the back of an angel, breaks
her thin spine.

You look the other way, look for a hero
rising from your hands, for a rainbow
in my flooded eyes.

It cannot be done. We cannot be more
than mortal.

Waking Up

**In the dawn's light clearing, I sweep
the glacier clouds
reach
my arms to your flesh, awakened from dream.**

**Plunging into ethereal
substance, head pressurized with fatigue,
your body pulled close to mine, and legs
criss-crossed like swords laid down –**

**I glance up
through our window, then down
to watch you roll over:
naturally revealed.**

Little Fly

**Little fly
are you lonely
like I?
Do you pray for
your day to come soon
or dream of the sun
on a cold afternoon?
Little fly
are you lonely
like I?**

**Come then,
let me kiss you.**

Pendulum

Remove the spies
from my grief.
I cannot defend myself
with such pale armour.
I cannot tell you it will be eternal,
this day in which I burn for your soft mouth.
I cannot say the door is there,
it is always there.
I drown kisses on your neck.
I reach that wave of endless choice,
returning from episode to episode
of our unforgettable unions. And then
the stars seem to stumble around
the globe, tripping for no reason
into grave oblivion. Like us, they have
their secrets and sorrows they cannot
share. Like us, they glow in the night's
pool-deep eye, unanchored
despite the gravity.

A Day To Recognize

Fields of
mystics invading
my mind.
My womb is full
of mercy's fine touch. Ideals
call and create
gusts of sobs. Sombre
smooth skin
and smoke
spiralling into
the air.
Sudden glory,
swift as
a dagger
and then
nothing at
all. My
tongue is
curled into
a knot –
What is
the point
of speaking?

**I hold
my mouth
in the
stance of
song. I see
waves
in the sky
brushed by a wink
of
silver-spliced
caresses.**

City Unborn

Out
on the sidewalk fringe
gulls converse in hostile tones.

Church doors open,
taking in all who care
to milk their withered souls.

Construction in the distance.
Towels hanging from clotheslines.

A dead pigeon lies
crushed on the road,

ignored
like the blazing buttercups
and love.

It Takes You

**Through the asylum streets
where the rain butters my hands
and mowed weeds scatter in piles on the curbs,
I look for your familiar figure
rushing between rush-hour strangers.**

**My bed is stale
with you wandering
from donut shop to open stages
silent and bewitched
by the lunar
mouth.**

**I reach my hand to cup
an autumn leaf descending
and feel
 feather-dust
 feather blown.**

Whenever I touch him

**Heavy shackle
around my shell.
He says no, no,
to the great descent**

**to hands locked in the wind,
on pillow or sheets.**

**October sun beating on my covered spine
So many walls erected in the name of home**

**He talks of black birds glowing
or running into webs as wide
as a tree's open arms.**

The Ground We Touch

**No lust to sing of or heartbreak
to bury. Circling the golden fields
of yesterdays gone,
coiling the hooded tomorrows**

**and all the white folds
of sky. Under
the driftwood stars,
a thousand sleepers drain the
waters from zenith high.**

**They crash down, sinking into
bedrock, stumbling below where
no bird could breathe.
And above where the oceans
burn and roll, fish take flight
like a million moons.**

The River

**Toads and kestrels shape
the river's being.
Being what? But song
and bird's breath
and even lovers who need
her current, her living fury
that communes equally with the sun and moon.**

**Seedlings and butterflies,
the river engulfs all in her rushing blood.
Death reflects beautifully in her
foaming shine. And the devil's rage
the salmon's struggle, the child's tossed-in penny
shapes her surly figure, is wine to her thirsty veins.**

**Branches and stones
vanish in her womb where never
the light has crept. Snails ride
her flesh to shore.**

**And though she is tired, she never rests,
desperate to embrace the sea, to ride
his undulating loins, and be bonded forever
to his salty grandeur.**

But if I Look

**If I keep thinking
how my hopes can flourish
in these seemingly luckless years,
soon I will be mad
with fear and futility.**

**But if I look at the branches of trees
stretching upward, individual as any
ancient god, and look and feel
their surety, complexity and peace . . .**

**If I strive to learn one thing from their
underappreciated presence, then awakened
I would be like a mustard seed
touched by sunlight.**

Gathering Joy for the Eye of God

**For the lions and toads
in salvation's nakedness
gather joy for the eye of God**

**For the squirrels that leap and the thrushes
that fly into clouds and the morning sky
like a pink sea, capturing the delight
of every waking child
For the infant who cut his toe
and the pregnant woman dancing stripped of clothes
For the cat watching out the window
and the stallion and mare in mating fury
For grass returning after being crushed by snow
and music seeping from a woman's middle-aged throat
For the one-winged hawk and the blind opossum
For the architect's dream and the writer's
unwritten vision
For the loneliness inherent in us all
and the longing and the ways for fulfilment
For the graveyards in the fall and the elephants drunk
on African leaves, for those who hear the insects' cheep
and for those who burn, blind, undefined
and raging
For the television screen enjoyed by two
and the worm rescued from a torrential rain
For those who love and those who choose
to forgive though every nerve commands
their heart to harden and yield to hate

gather joy for the eye of God.**

Seed of Living

Mostly possibilities
return a million times
over: the chance
in every life cycle
to escape
patterned destinations.

I could tear my breath
in half attempting
a different rhythm.
I could be burning, bloated
on mistakes and bad beginnings.

Nightmares flail across the void,
sinking through
unimaginable universes.
Then tomorrow, the television,
the zodiac spin, anger at circumstances.
It is the condition that makes sway
dandelion leaves, breaks
the stem of the sunflower.

As dusk denies every pent-up demand.
As morning cleanses every hard-held need
obsolete.

Rocking Towers

Tonight, the void creeps
in, with him, through
the wood framed doors.

cold

like a heap of ash after
a day underground.

Hair-splits

the bone, the eager heart, the eyes
that follow every gesture.

What survives now of the tower dream,
the stone skipping and the wishing well?

Both hands pressed against the T.V. set,
trying to block the talk

and hold

the cut and thistle.

Both lovers glancing at the street lights'
glare, waiting
for the other to give

the word –

a blue blue touch
farewell.

Pieces to Gather

A drowned fish, silver, snared
with an expression of permanent ache.
Eyes, fish stunned, fish glass
glaring from a window in the market
in the dubious afternoon.

The shattered green
of ocean from a storm-struck sky,
lightening-flesh tipping, ripping the lid
and letting in the rains.

Mountains of harsh winters, opaque
like the wings on a featherless angel.
Mountains, male in their faith and in their marriage
to moonlight.

Chains, slate grey and criminal
as clouds over rainbows, as necessary
as a first childhood dream
laughed at, forgotten.

We Rode

**We rode our wounded dream
to a place drawn out like Prairie
ground. A washcloth was all we needed,
a sacred rock or stepping stone.**

**Lingering there with useless hands,
many times ready for the culling field,
holding elephant bones under
condemning light.**

**We swept the dead-end from our horizon.
We lived looking within, seeking out some mercy
behind our bondage.**

**This land knew our pacing,
our ineffectual pilgrimage.
It was fire and still burns like war or
a fallen constellation.**

**We spun our wishes in mid-air,
tilled the lifeless soil**

**mourning the hot metal
that poured between good fortune
and the bloodstains of destiny.**

After the Day

**Love is in my belly like evening tea,
comforting after the day's rush.
Love is there like a discipline
I used to own, exciting
because of its blind determination.**

**The old man walks the alleyway
with his cane and curious eyes.
He waves to me from the window, then
stretches his arms to cup the wind.
Somewhere the stray has been saved
from the freezing-frost. Somewhere
a woman has conceived, and a dog
has found his favourite toy.**

**Love is a monk's old robe
tainted a rich bluish green.
Like twilight blankets the day
it sits on my lap covering -
cherished, unclaimed.**

I Dreamt Again

**I dreamt again
of the past encroaching
like a wet towel, tight
around my clothed body.
I dreamt I felt alone, doomed to dance
on a suspended scaffold's floor.**

**Among the bitter people I walked,
near their self-pity and inconsolable isolation.
I tried to separate myself, split the heavy air
with my fingers. I tried
to wave their fear into the mouth
of everlasting light.
But love was bitten at the stem,
and the hideous thirst within
grew again like a snake its second, tougher skin.**

**I dreamt I wandered half-made buildings,
where squatters lived, sheltered
in the dank concrete ruins.
I travelled through without shoes, dreaming
of sand-soft ground.**

Something New

I hold my love before you
in the silver eye of winter.
I nudge myself from a restless year,
dancing upon the crust of a breaking wave.
I feel the taste of Japanese ginger enter my mouth.
My head is full of phantoms. My fingerprints
are held hovering inches from fire.
Starships and everglades are overturned.
Thumbs are caught in car doors.
The blunt scythe of Death carves, shredding
history's figures of ruthless pride.
Ideas of beauty change from century to century
but not ambition, not the way
the ego demands to be heard,
regardless of brutality or waste.
I open the empty pantry. I write down names
on the pieces of a shattered lamp post.
In the silver eye of winter,
I hold my love before you.

Years Before His Resurrection

On the sidelines
in a tale as lasting as fairy tales
he recounted the details
of his Russian heritage,
several centuries past.

Through an open window
he stretched his neck and laughed
at all the sidewalk walkers
walking beneath him.

With tortured eyes and soft, cold skin,
he spent his time playing piano in candle light, sometimes
counting his collection of exotic butterflies.

He longed for death or for some substance
in the wind. He caught the night between
his eyelashes, reading Nostradamus outload.

Behind closed curtains he nourished the cavity within
by reciting the prayers of obscure saints, offering appeasement
to his guilt that no hope could overcome. He was not

a typical man, not proud, not tender,
but full of churning lava, full like a storm cloud
before the storm, like the belly
of a soon-to-be mother, full and focused
like a predator sensing
the frightened heart of its prey.

Dried Heroism

**The void comes and contains me.
Who picks the last straw
fated to carry the dynamite?
On shore, near a fern tree
I saw an umbrella break
and a worm exposed to the wind's wet fury.**

**How I long for more than a nickel's worth
of comfort in my shoes,
for a spoonful of light in my mouth,
to kiss its translucency and praise midnight
gone.**

**Shame is not my therapy, but fading
fragile as sanity often is,
wanting a sign from God but finding
cars recklessly racing over speed bumps, rain water
flooding in mid-winter and an empty stomach.**

**How to dance on this floor of dread, learn
to feed my horses washed seaweed
when all the grass is dead**

**How to see my future as more
than a tiny creature scurrying helplessly
in the folds of an infant's hand**

Calling In

The Journey Continued in Four Parts

Part One – The Step

*(barren metallic fields,
a harvest ready to haul, infested,
lock-jaw stagnation)*

Never Holy

You asked for a light
at the end of the tunnel
and was told
there is no light at the end
because you are the light
guiding your escape.
You are the living fresh-water fountain
you seek, the high rock in the ocean.

Then you were told there is no tunnel,
no distance between the dark and light.
There is pain and loyalty to that pain
and false hopes that claim us
like a deceitful friend plotting betrayal.

**You were told to be glad at daybreak, when the battle
ensues. Against the rain, don't have any secrets,
even let your own death be revealed.**

**You were told never stop longing for the clarity
of your spirit, give no one up to the slaughter,
eat only what does not scream or thrash.
If there is a high wall, climb.
If a steep incline, find a rope, tie a rope
and edge your way gently down.**

**You were told to make bread, give a loaf away
and you might never go hungry.
And even if you do go hungry, then hunger
is the season you are called to endure.**

**You asked for light at the end of the tunnel
and was told
six more days, then seven - open sail -
eventually the wind will wake, spare you
the cause of your consuming dread.**

*(Four Heads of Evil Within and Without –
Resentment; Bitterness; Self-pity; Self-aggrandizement)*

Revival

**Be still, in the hostile landscape, be still,
find provision, refuse the fear.
Firmly self-sufficient, valuing your
success measured by fulfilment of God's commands
and the sweet exchange of eternal experiences.
Is there anything to regret? No,
there is only what must be given up
- self-pity - the grotesque body
that grew beside your own, grew because
of your suffering, a deformity that
grew to help you carry the weight of that suffering,
a deformity that held a place for your secret pride.**

**But now, unbound, you must mercy-kill it,
release and dissolve its surface layers and under-layers.
It is always in a state of perpetual decay, supporting.
Release the poltergeist apparition,
re-distribute your cells, align
without its sickly features haunting and its whisperings
that lead to madness, whispering
“This suffering is yours. How amazing you are to carry it!”
and “No one will love you if you don't carry it.”**

**Be loved in your joy and crazy impulses,
your sinews riveting creative overflow.
Be bouncing, impossible, wrenched from its illusion,
off your leash, off your rocker.**

**Discover dignity under the high trees,
by the rapids, skipping stones,
stepping on the slippery rocks,
stepping closer to the thrashing contours,
closer yet to its elemental song.**

(Awaiting Impact)

Calling In

If you see the daybreak
but cannot walk out of the cave,
if you are still feasting on small beetles and cave-moss
instead of apples and mushrooms, how far really
does your sight go? Far, winning yourself
a legacy but not far enough to be more than
a story told.

How do you collect the emptiness and make a stone,
a salvation, carved with a celestial roof and sturdy ground?

Beg for movement - ask to drink from the cup today -
to perch on the hillside, walk down
the hillside and greet the blessing
like an open-hearted child, running
full speed into your arms.

Take more than symbols, signs, tarot and spells.
Lick the forehead of love, taste the salt
on your tongue, gently covering folds and creases.
Stay in the glory, tangible, building, connecting.

The deck is clear. Hatch the egg.
Search the upper rooms,
carry your bed to the second floor, welcome in
the seductive sweetness, invite it to climb your steps.
First, shedding its secrets, single in its carnal commitment.
Then, feeding your body with its gravity and resolve.

Part Two – Going Back to Let Go

(learning the lesson of Lot's wife)

Their bed, Your body

**Rocking under the blade,
not touching, almost touching but not.
Walking into the savage yard, where
decaying soulless wanderers
crowd the space and drink misery instead of water.**

**Passing through the yard,
closing the gate, never to return.**

**It is a dark enchantment - behind you, bolted,
enclosed. No price high enough could steady
their ravenous hunger, no sacrifice given to save them
was ever even noticed.**

**They will keep wandering
in the dead-zone where no mercy
can reach them.**

**That garden is a place where connection
to God has been willfully severed, where souls
have dissolved into wisps of ghostly fever, ungraspable,
doomed to the storeroom, to the torment tangibly pouring out
of guilt, shame, and outrage born from self pity.
Pity them, then move on.**

**They are full of secrets, unwashed undergarments
and dusty overcoats, cramped with illness.
Your hands cannot be a shield,
their shadowy substance will seep through your pores.
All that can be done is to**

**hold hands with Jesus,
commit to run with Jesus. Make this choice,
and watch the swallows circle their nests,
watch the leveling sun
as all good possibilities expand.**

**And you, reborn by this choice,
having shed yourself of their torment,
can rub yourself with lavender,
manifest your eternal potential,
stepping into the wave, becoming the wave
at one with such power,
all directions in rhythm, forward.**

(see with both eyes)

When Dust Covers the Sacred

Time is hard on the dream.

**The dream, once sharp bold lines
becomes an untidy room - clothes behind
the bed, food crumbs hidden in corners.
For this exchange there is maturity,
the binding up of existence with the inexplicable,
the terrible and the flaccid.**

**The dangerous duty, the succubus of worry
and then the bitter beast that grows a head beside
your own...in youth, it is easy to imagine the
chaos cleaned, ordered like the many houses of heaven,
but after the fruit has long ago been picked
and there is nothing left to eat, your body changes
to find fuel in air like the baleen whales,
sucking in, filtering out, tiny nourishment,
trying to maintain fat stores, energy
for movement and a steadier type of strength
that only needs the air for answers,
breaking down the barriers of the dream,
letting in influences once firmly barred, letting down
the unsolved puzzles, picking up a housecoat and
relaxing.**

**The dream then becomes everything - tasks,
small gestures of love, like hugging your grown children,
feeding hazelnuts to squirrels
or watching your lover dance, carefree.**

**The dream is a small thing,
creeps up behind you like an unexpected neck rub,
cultivates in increments, holds its best power
when unattended, yielding to the unconscious flow,
crushing the big-dream-treasure into an edible form.**

*(the more love given,
the more meaning received)*

Sink the Cup

**Ignited, set afloat upon a great ocean.
And although the life below the surface is foreign
it is drawn from the one source, and not-so-foreign
at the core.**

**Speak up upon that burning boat-pyre, drain your cup,
release your shock and anger into a spoken-aloud prayer.**

**They will come, the angels of the sea -
humpbacks, octopi, porpoises and silver bright fish -
from the dimensional platforms of subcutaneous depths
they will rise with conviction, intimate
as the heat that encroaches and the flames reaching,
determined to transform your flesh into ash.**

**Leap into their fins and tentacle arms.
They too are sacred and able to offer deliverance.
Forget the land and land creatures
with air pocket lungs and the need for direct sunlight.
These water creatures will work magic
and make you one with their own, so when the fire arrives
it will have no sovereignty over
your plumped-up water-bearing body.**

**Go under, down inside a world without fire,
take your cup, where the weight and pressure
of the depths is enough justice to bear.
Get close to the Earth's centre, find a soft place at the bottom.
Remember to love everything that goes by -
the eyeless and the ugly, those that creep and those that glow.**

**Here your cup will be unnecessary,
but even so, here, it will remain always full.**

Part Three – Why Not?

*(The Poet is not there to save you
The Poet is you)*

Why not?

**Why not
a sphere,
a monstrous breakthrough
breaking through the sphere
creating a gale, a flash, uncovering
a raging realm of heaven before
unknown?**

**Why not the mountain
that was both shield and finish line
dissolved into the flossy ocean-sand
particles, sinking, dispersing over the vast
salt-saturated floor?**

**Why not love strong as a flock of geese
blazing a dark pattern over blue, or love
like a cave, deep underground where a ready-made
meal is found?**

**Why not the backbone
that was believed as backbone
a chunky armour removed,
and the hand coming in, pliant and warm,**

**finding skin and muscles rounded, pushing
into true intimacy?**

**Why not the heart a fish
with a coin in its mouth?**

**The warrior, now a mother and still
the same?**

**Why not a steady supply of nourishment,
everything found when needed, everything given
when asked?**

**Why not the gathered yarn, the knitted
sweaters?**

**Why not
the person on the bus sitting
in a suffering madness, just his eyes
looking down, teaching you
the unburnished treasure within
- compassion -
seasoned, for you, the world and all?**

(a miracle witnessed)

Not a Dream

**It will seem like a dream,
blanketing your shackles in light
until they vanish like a passing breath of
wind.**

**You will walk
and the iron gate will be unlocked and open.
At the intersection
you will know it is not a dream,
but a beautiful reckoning, a reconciliation
between reality and ideals.**

**What you value and keep,
and what you hand over
will equal in authority.
You will be escorted onto the path
in spite of practical obstacles.
In spite of the guarded prison cell,
your freedom will arrive,
gloriously and easefully.
You will get dressed and follow.**

**This is not a dream. There will be no blood spilt
to ensure your release. It will feel like a dream.
What you commit to will be your lead and your tether.
The shadow of tormented suffering will
be waved away by the angel's magnificent hand.**

**The way will be cleared
and tomorrow**

**you will be rejoicing, opened,
remaining open.**

Part Four – Coming Home

*(kenneled in four sterile walls,
dig until your roots are exposed, weeping)*

Forgiveness is Freedom

You open the door
knowing that light is mercy
and mercy is light.
Piece-by-piece has shifted
to the whole, split off
from attachment to personal sin,
from ego encased around your karma
that holds you pressed to it, believing in it,
living inside its loop like an unquestioned tradition.

You open the door and let go
of your individual inheritance
to know a flow between
yourself and heaven, without ritual
as catalyst, only God's love
as completion, only
Jesus's gift of utter anarchy.

Letting go of repetitive spiritual duties
that chip away at the rock because the song is sung
"There is no rock!" It has vanished, the burden
of blood and ancestry removed:
forgiveness in the depths,

freedom at the starting line.

(Interval of agony, elapsed)

The Answer

**We must be a potion
mixed. Alone we have
potency and purpose still,
but combined is the breakthrough
explosion, the cry of light that
will grind heaven into sparkling
dust we can bathe our bodies in.
Let's bathe, hand in hand, limb over limb,
relax in shimmering warm waters.**

**The guilt that was yours,
guilt for feeling responsible for choices
that were not yours, exorcise it,
burn that haunted palace down and construct
a new hut where we can live and make
a clean home in, pure from ghosts
and the blood bonds of false ownership.**

**I see you alive and blazing,
your chained foot unchained
and the sun warming your back.
I see you with two hands working their strength,
kneading this sick world with your voice
so strong it will spawn revelations, shape
spiritual fires, ladders from lightning bolts, splitting
the wheat from the chaff.**

**Be honoured you were chosen for this task.
How could you record it if you didn't live it,
if you didn't suck in the last**

of its shame and suffering threshold,
choke on its dry and brittle pieces of bone?
So suck it in, take it into your bleeding esophagus,
then watch it dissolve, its frayed and familiar howling
vanished into a new-found brightness.

We must climb the high wall together.
Us, as one, or not at all.
That is the commitment of our marriage
- spit and gore, glory and bond -

Eccentric dancers, fierce creators,
our shoulders as swords slicing the pie,
casting off this second mortality,
together, breaking the wind in two,
being born in the space between, landed.

Illusions Burned, Radiant Light Restored

Part 1 - Exiled into a Ruthless Land

Time without becoming

**It won't work.
You thought it would work, but it won't.
Clutched jaw, vermin making nests
in your gut, melted silver pouring
over your extremities, hot-plate
your whole hand must rest upon.**

**And here, you are supposed to find peace,
but you can't. You can't even glance
at that inhospitable land, can't even step
a toe into its puddle of spittle without sinking,
leaves you
like a mad crow cawing aimlessly here, there
across the sky.**

**Stones here, fish there, people moving,
going where they want to, and you, stuck, perpetually,
feet locked in the mire - misquotes buzzing,
barely a light across the moor.**

**You hoped it would work. You believed,
and in that belief, you touched happiness
for weeks, woke up thinking this hell
was wrapped and sealed, that your freedom
could be activated and somehow
a great merciful tide would come
and clear a path.**

But now you know it won't work.
Now you know who you are,
a broken umbrella that won't work.
Fated to feel the impossible tension
of who you are and who you wish you could be.

The birds are somebodies. Each tiny sparrow,
worth embracing. You wish you held value
like the sparrow or even a cloud
that for a moment
gives relief from a relentless sun.

You wish you could carry this weight
a little longer. But both your arms are broken.
Your heart too.

A greater force or just
this dull aching horror of
no-truth, no-connection
just the pound pound plaster-cast-mould
of what could-be, used-to-be, never-really-was.

Make me a hole big enough to escape from,
to join the flight of burning gods, retreating like they did,
into myth-oblivion. Pull the seasons from my mind,
memories when I thought love would sustain,
maintain its potency in spite of age,
desolation and disappointment.

Every ideal I held sacred has crumbled,
bread crumbs now,
smaller than pebble stones scattered on patio steps,
never existing at all.

I am a placeholder substitute there to feed,
provide shelter but never home.
I am blind, unchallenged, beyond the limit for redemption.

I am fighting the sea and the sea does not panic,
lives within
its own self-directed rhythm.

The sea's flesh is stronger than my marrow, than a war-cry,
than the binding-ties of loved ones lost and buried.
The sea will receive me, not because I am special,
but because that is what it does.

My fight is fire, but only mortal, and the sea
has my body, fills my pores and lungs,
takes me below.

This is the voice
that heralds and hardens,
sunk, elusive
far from any shore.

Colours, saturated with salt,
whose better business is taken up
and bloated, dulled of any identity.

This is the rhythm,
once so exact and necessary,
fallen below, muffled, interrupted,
spliced into unrecognizable dead forms.

This is the time spent
answering a calling, a duty
of divine command, slack now
as a pierced jellyfish,
abstract enough to be ignored.

This is the voice
that burst forth from my fire,
moved with violence into the light,
showed wings, a detailed face,
survival's thundering veins.

This is the voice
I thought would crack the sun a little,
crack the mind to let leak in
a delicious deepened dimension.

**I risked a destiny but failed to germinate.
Now I take up my luggage and wander the streets
with that voice,**

**claiming revenge in aggressive madness,
(a quiet vapour only
when children pass by.)**

Tid-bits, burnt toast, is that the substance
of intensity or is brave conviction
only recognized in another world
or in heaven?

But heaven will not have me,
no matter how hard I swing it - heaven stays
a meditation mirage, a glimpse taken in,
taking me down,
not worth a fraction of the effort
I put into vaulting for peace.

Failed as a sunrise over a prison cell in dungeon ground.
Failed as condolences to the bereaved, or a sandwich
made, placed in the hands of the dying.

I took a step and crushed a flower.
I covered myself with blankets and lost
the willpower to breathe.

Truck overloaded with debris
driving straight toward me.
I should leap onto safe ground,
but there are high cliffs on either side.
I should lie flat and hope the wheels go between,
not crush my ribs, my femur, my pinky toe.

How can I welcome the spring?
What should I do?
Over and over the cut hand
escaping the hold, briefly,
then back, barred and shackled
by fool's gold.

Part 2 – Defeat Masked as Acceptance

Blossoms That Resist Their Bloom

**Dashed against
the sidewalk curb,
opened up, cracked into
pieces. No sooner
the storm rains came and
washed me down the sewer drain
into pipes I'd rather not go.**

**But who lives here, in the invalid waters?
Creatures thriving on the potent scent and grim.
Creatures with their own rapport, societies, and even
love.**

**I will be the necklace you wear in the dim corner.
You keep saying one step one step, and
I will keep afloat in this sewage substance,
to not settle among the other mutations,
subjections – the great bowing down.**

**But remember, once I was a ruler,
doling out punishments and gifts upon
my erratic whims.
Once I cramped my mind with violence,
brooded on the sliced-throat of revenge.
That is why I am here,
backside floating in watered-down excrement,
barred between metal pipe walls.**

**If mercy is available, I will take it.
If not, like you said, one step, one step.**

**Cherry dreams are Cherry dreams.
Courage when cornered
is more.**

Biting the marrow
of obscurity, planting my wisdom
in plastic pots - passages I conquered,
steps I took, cut through the dreamy level
into the ruthless underbelly formations
tainted, untainted complexities,

but only
trite verbiage gets attention and eternity is
sucked into a keyhole darkness.
Lightweight riders riding,
applauding the trickle made from accidental saliva,
giving credence to feel-good epigrams, lacking in literature
and monumental sway.

God said paint, so I painted. God said break, so
I broke – the canvas, my heart and sanity.
Starving in the shadowland, frozen, cast out
in the middle of a dead lake.

Fire is a world of two masters. In its light
there is a reunion of acts, a sealed equal pact
between purification and destruction.

My roots are strong, no doubt, I have grown
high and thick-trunked, gathering greenery, but
in an empty field, empty of roads and wildlife,
empty of a steady stream.

The dark part
The lost part
the found-again not-wanted part
has arrived like a package at my door.

Purgatory leaning to pick it up, shake it up
and take scissors to the outline.
Inside is a mask made of fish-skin
containing a nameless vibration,
an unshifting necessity to put on, wear
and fit in.

I want to dispose of it, crush it then
rip it into tiny pieces, drop it down a sewer grate
far far from my home – maybe even take a bus
to another city and leave it there,
deep underground where no trace of it remains.

The tormenting part
The hard-concrete-wet-prison-floor part
The chained-to-the-wall part
is again, at my door.

It is noon hour and I still haven't
put it on, as its stench dulls my appetite,
is really too much to bear, but I must put it on.

When I know the exit sign was just a mirage
how will I hold up now?
Silent in its deathless domain?
Silent in this unending anguish?

**When hope is gone but faith remains,
in this place, miracles dare to bloom.**

**The wrong part
is the right part
because it is playing a part**

**I will wear its acid peel, place its flesh
over my own face, wear the mask
hurting as I do, then
I will hold out my hands,
expecting, to heaven.**

Part 3 - The Wound is the Answer

The Flow of Matter

**Take the light,
Lose the light,
racing across a panicked terrain.
Fear is a sloping hill mudslide.**

**You pierced the earth with your stick,
left it there, left running, thinking
your speed would catch on fire, seed
growth on dead ground, meaning more
than just thoughts impaled in your mind.**

**The stick stayed. It is still there, far from
where your limping dreams have finally arrested.**

**Release the burden of trying.
You have lost. This stone wall.
This patch of yellowed grass and the brutal
whirlwind all around – this is yours.
Make something of it.
Take the time, because you have that too.**

**Dissolve your belief of a mission
up into the rays of the giving sun.
There is no light different than the darkness.
Feel it flashing, flashing far away, rising,
broad shoulders, furrowed brow
yell it out one last time
then surrender.**

Standing in the dark bend
of a wanderer's insight where
neither solitude nor the life beneath
the great seas will do.

Which dead body do you keep? Salting
wounds for the sake of enlightenment,
framed with things you cannot glory in
even for a time.

It is nature and it is
a passing motion.
You will mourn its starving carcass
for you know nowhere else to rest
your heart and eyes.

Stand by the fires of liberation,
join inspiration with accomplishment.
The word is NO and it is mighty and reasonable.
None of this is a problem, even the dread
that spreads like maggots above your abdomen
in your leisure time, in your working-in-chains time,
all the time, surprising you with its intensity
and burrowing, burrowing.

Hold your lips tight, buckle up, straight away be
God's soldier, holding acceptance as
your sword.

You are not impotent, You are just
one reality. Think slowly. Your life is not yours
to keep. Feeling abandoned or belonging is
just a stirring up agitation – water, moon, desert wind.
Nothing is missing.

**Where you are broken,
the light steps, is captured and glows
the most colourful where it is fractured.**

It is your fingerprint in holy bloom.

It might be a ritual dance, a memory of walls
and the dew collecting on steel window bars,
but it is also a fossil you have gilded to your soul,
a door keeping you in this room, incarcerated,
white-knuckled and bawling.

You think you deserve it, that many lifetimes ago,
before the monastery, you did deeds
you would now wither from,
your now vegetarian soul, conscious
when you see slabs of cut-up carcasses
in the grocery store, conscious
of the torture and fear endured.

But you deserve only the wind your prayers
are carried on, only the smiles of your grown-up children
and your husband, happy beside you,
his sail full mast.

That place where the stagnant prison waters stank
and your feet developed unhealable sores,
is over, not even a rope nor an army
could carry you across
into a sunlit field.

Part of you is still there,
living out the punishment daily, toiling
in angry futility, tied to a tombstone with vultures
gathered around.

Wax yourself unhooked. The animals love you:

**The mother bird feeds her young
right above your head, knowing
you are safe, joined to the psychic link.**

Part 4 – Between Notes, An Interval of Peace

**Where The Rays of the Sun Are Blocked
They Rest, Then Warm**

**In the summer your wore
your loose clothes.**

**In the winter, your layered yourself
in velvet.**

**It is spring and the ships
are setting out under a spring sky.**

**Take the time to wash your stone wall,
chip out a window, keep chipping and soon
it will be large enough for you to slip through.**

**The dark grammar is deepening, but so
you have made a choice to break neck-to-neck
with the soothsayers of doom, then to surpass them,
turn down an unleveled path and make true headway.**

**The rain will come, the stormy thunder
and the wind, but you have earned yourself
the skill of withstanding.
The parameters are bleeding through and your house
for now is happy.
Take a second to be grateful:**

**Immortality is only that –
a moment in full recognition
of the harmony innate in eternity
and the conscious love that begets
such perfection.**

**In the fall, you put away the bird feeders.
It is spring and still the birds are singing.
They survived and their singing
brings you joy.**

Changing gears in the long-held-note
of the lion's roar,
summoning
a way forward that does not jar
against your sacred values
or block the energy up or down, in
a stagnant pool of algae larvae-laid waters.

Take a hand and listen - there is still glory
to be found, a tent to build, a tree to climb.

Take what is untouched and touch it, craft it
like spores on the moon,
or team-spirit high-five it
in the bleachers.

Right now, what is not narrow is too wide
and barren, a place where even a young horse
would get tired racing across.
You were supposed to have passed this place by now,
or so you dreamed. You have only rough-cuts on your screen,
shapes like phantoms, hardly visible.

Inside, you are always tired.
Are you dying like you did in another lifetime
from a blood disease, alone in a room?

Or are you going
somewhere else this time,
coming to your senses, full gear,
a master of your circumstance, finally, ablaze?

The order of things was simplified,
silence ensued and questions left you
folded under the Buddha-wing.
Times in the shower when you heard and learned
the worries of the day were enough,
that there never were graphics or translations,
but only the raw-hewed truth
that flamed forth its music and love
without peculiarity, pure, in charge of
everything living, there

you felt yourself a queen in the lap pool
doing dives, and finding your coronation party
full of only wanted guests.
In this calm, you lost an onslaught of examples,
but held playtime as fair-time, power-of-the-spirit-time
occupying the four corners of the shower
and all the dimensions too.

Windows became houses became homes, places
of enactment, concentrated love and many broken
unfixable edges where the greatest fault
was always indifference as default to giving up.

The order of things was reduced
to a straight and infinite line.
Excess was swept away
and a breezy sobering became elemental,
austerity, soft as kindness.

Speaking, overlapping
a fighter's field, then a gate to
squeeze through, mark your territory
on the other side.

A summer on the other side
where you could will all rounds, drop
your shield and summon in the wildlife.

Mornings there to ruminate,
cultivate your calling to reach
an undiscovered octave,
craving the centre of the storm
and knowing it
like your morning shower.

Friends are far or going into surgery wards
to hunt down a destiny.
Family is fractured, engraving
your failures centre-wall.

You see a driver shouting
at a mellow pedestrian
and a bronze statue tumbling over
in a flood.

You run to the gate and it is barred tight, not a crack
to slip a finger through. Above, it is different.

**Do not miss the chance,
Slaughter your past
and even your accent.**

**Leap up into the tornado wind and spin-sail
out of your mortal sleep, bone-picked, out in the open,
looking at, loving, the first moon ever.**

Part 5 - There Will Be Movement

Commitment In The Unending Desert

**In case you don't turn
but monotony pursues you
like a patient wild cat or
your fondest dream realized
has left you tight with dread - then be
the Buddha-master in the folded
seams, be the highrise apartment
looking down
and eat bread, sip your tea.**

**In case it will always be a matter of
just-getting-through, and stress and guilt
flank either side of your relief, linking arms,**

**then remember Jesus and his words
about the wind, smile at the expectant animals, find love
in the broken and bent, remember angels exist and God is
neither cunning nor withholding, but always available.
Be available too, open as a crumbled dam, open as
the first smells of spring.**

**Vivid days waiting to watch the eclipse.
The hawk has circled, telling you it is coming,
but in case it doesn't, salvation is within, tied
to your own commitment, tied to the upstairs rooms**

**each filled with a sleeping loved one, each
closest to your heart.**

The light came like light does
illuminating the clawing hand,
stretching taut the slack conviction.

It brought to the surface the groaning ache
of anxiety, making fingertips quiver and
their pulse beat in unnatural speed.

The light exposed the tender spot,
the bandaged maul,
merciless in its thorough claim.

After that, the body was done, the full moon waned
and ideals carried the weight of serious difficulties,
no longer racing full charge.

You walked with such exposure,
and learned how to surrender, dissolve
your fears into the light.

Many times it was that way,
necessary to make the decision
to release your load
otherwise you would sink –
until you stood bare beneath the sky,
resources and water tipped over the side –

just you now and that light,
not even time traded spaces with it,
not death or the grief of memories.
The light came and did what light does.

**Can you hear its vibrational hum,
burning all the flash cards, all the pyramid-glory?**

**Patterns that were once grafted to your biology,
patterns that defined you, patterns that after the light
are unearthed, have nowhere to belong.**

Dreamer, don't forget to dream,
or forget your gleaming split fire
masquerading as normalcy
lost in everyday bravery, getting things done
in range of the pawn shop and the dentist, shopping
for fruit, all the while a thousand yards above
the streetwalk curb, seeing shadows of celestial
beings overlap on the pavement,
dense in their other-dimensional realm.

You vault off their cloud, into a place without clouds,
your mind a keeper of their language,
draped in dread one moment, the next, exploding
in effervescent kaleidoscope floral bands
feeling anxiety like thunder, touching rocks
like touching flesh

charged by the child skipping, the tied-up dog.
The estates are weeping wine, and the ships are loaded
with fat-stores racing past starving islands.

You don't know how to live.
You don't know one good day.

Is it a wound or is it a vision,
roughed-in displays of immortality
blooming, longing
for a lasting harvest?

Sturdy spirit
in pure afterglow,
voyage with me
with your wealth and force,
past the Earth's mantel into
the inner core.

Never reckless but blinded
by refined instincts unified.
Activity without labour.
Joy with no reflection.

In the thick undergrowth
slide through the parameter,
making yourself a master
who faces everything as though
it was the first time.

Take the ring and turn:
Commitment in eternal flow.
Love at last on salty lips,
heralding in
a devouring release.

Smells of spring
Smells of water
No gear, no ribbons
of glory

**for
this is glory,
and whatever else is
pales beside this bouquet of our origins,
sweet quaking, last-call fulfilment.**

Washed clean,
washed your garments
under your garments
triumphant with truth.
You lifted your mask, opened your mouth
and let your tongue be exposed.

Pent-up, brewing a seizure
under your skin.
The graveyard has re-absorbed its corpses.
The paintings on the walls
are breathing again.
Boat-sailing at sunrise,
entranced by the possibilities imagination allows.
O breath – colourful anomalies!
This is your place, fortified by authenticity.
The grass is finally growing,
the fires are wooed and contained.
You love this joy, your house without a lock-chain.
You love your freedom and your secrets.
You spread out, your roots have joined,
entwined, singular.

Landscapes stirred, hot coal,
hotter in the blue flame.
Summer walks terrible into your yard,
but the wind is in the lead and you will ask for
a multitude of blessings, believing.

You will die in the change and shape yourself
a new achievement. You will be diligent,
canceling old thoughts, creating new thoughts
that snuff out the physical dread of doom that infiltrate
like poison a flower's soft pores.

You will go to where love goes, following,
healed of all affliction, even death, by faith,
no longer a pawn of desperately doing
to hold yourself a little closer to God.

When you see, you are still,
disrobed of your past,
anchored in the burn of being.

When you feel, you feel
his hand reaching out, lifting you out
when your faith has faltered,
you feel
his affectionate mercy, love, receiving, covering your sins
as the only absolution, and then you feel his sorrow,
are in awe of his obedience, in spite of such sorrow.

**When you know, you know
miracles are right as home is,
are the result of stepping into the current, aligned.
When you know, you know**

**Jesus is radical, never easy -
demands alertness and surrender,
devotion and doing combined,
offers one slot, one string, thin but unbreakable -
rhythm blessed, rhythm revolutionized.**

Into the nonsense depths
of plywood and pull
where fairness is the fallacy seen
as it always was and courage builds
like a patio – one stone at a time.

If you mount the depths and let yourself
go, it will be love you fall into and also
heartache from this gutsy deed. You will find
whiplash, and also warmth

but mostly
you will be living, not driving, but whirled away
by the wind, free of dust and accumulation
of monotonous gestures. You will go
and give the best of yourself,
another light lit to rage in the corner of your room,
strong in promise but still unsure.

leap
into the place your worldly wisdom tells you
not to go, but you know if you don't leap
you might as well grow up,
assent to the rotting ways and coveted fears around you,
you might as well start picking your plot and throw out
the calendar for all your days forward will be the same
one after another.

**You know the centre is wide, let it widen even more.
See the centre point as mercy.
There is fear in this new possibility of joy.
There are many ‘what ifs?’
Trade your coat for naked skin.
Your gift-risk is finally here.**

**Hold it, caress it, honour it, feed it everything
it needs, and leap.**

Part 6 – Only The Wind

Only The Way

**Caked in the crusted past,
spoonfed a dilemma you cannot
escape from and is bound to take you down
while clawing for freedom.**

**But there is glory
in the mountain's ridge, glory
in the sewer tunnels and in the medicine you take
to kill the gnawing pain – head stretched into a whiff
of rust-dust, bolted in place, but cracking.**

**This is your name, your life today, not in an imagined
tomorrow. Feed the small creatures if you can.
If you cannot, remember a time when you did, and know
that moment is still going on, like all moments,
sphere-held, mighty and forever –**

**so be kind
and be ready to change at full strength, for the sky
is churning, you cannot see it, but every moment
is giving you a new pattern to play with.**

**Hold your breath, keep holding, solid in this treachery,
revolt against your own perspective,
break your debts and all your days ahead
hard against an open window**

Bind the ghost
to the earth, touch
the covers and pull
out a song, a whisper
of forgiveness. Anchored
in sensual currents,
holding hands, thighs
and perfect movement.

Love, this is air, enough
to get you through
the skeleton forests of yesterday
and the milestone thicket thorns of
perceived tomorrows.

Still in the joy, fishing for coins, finding
coins, clean and glittering, pulled from
the bottom.

I love my love with the same purity
of our first gaze. I love my love, shedding our shadows,
merged in what is ours alone to know and keep.

We thought we were broken, but we are not.
Our fires have not wilted, but
have become arrows
- shot - one after another
beating on the river's surface, leaving a mark,
then sinking, traceless,
swallowed into the flow.

You held me in the fog,
fearful I would find the fringe
and crack. I took up a broom.
You set down the broom and told me
to explore the pattern of dirt, find meaning
in its intricate vineyard, be a woman
of observation, great endurance and then of joy.

You warned me not to plunge into the reflection,
(bitterness brighter than the dubious sun)
but to hold conference with what was lacking,
sit in the open space, tie my shoes, brush my hair,
take stock of the vacancy and see
if by being still it gets smaller,
starts imploding, becomes a village of amoebas
that eventually turns into plants, then ants
and starlings, drinking at the bin.

You held me in the midnight iris
when my hope had hardened.
You told me don't even try to comfort the pain,
because by doing so, you only make it stronger,
locking it inseparable to your vitality.

I took the stairs, following.
I took a leap and honoured its design.

And you, you honoured that deed
and were pleased.

Part 7 – Arms Once Folded, Then Slack, Now Open

Freedom By The Fires

**By the fires where you saw
the hunters' faces exposed,
the groaning darkness growing, encompassing
any trace of tender love, growing like
a foal into a stallion – strong, unstoppable,
full of wild fury.**

**The hunters promised to devour
every Elder tree, every animal that took shelter
in their green folds, and even the multi-colored insects,
keepers of the balance.**

**Then Jesus walked the Earth, offered the living waters
from a well, sprang from history, separated from
tradition, mores and the lock-step of rigid ritual.**

**Tearing at the sky, he folded its skin back to reveal
a new level of heaven unseen before.
Once this happened,**

**the hunters still ruled but now
there a way was to jump over their skilled spears,
a narrow way to redemption with no training wheels,
no handle bars.**

The courage of complete surrender.

**The hunters remain in the streetcars, in corner stores,
at the family table. But Jesus remains too,
a gift of God's greatest mercy
- the master scythe and the purifying balm -**

**wounds are lifted, all around the hunters,
children are dancing, lovers and old people too –
you see them,**

**followers of the wind,
nomad gatherers, receivers
of the charge.**

Publication Acknowledgments

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in:
**Outlaw Poetry; Academy of the Heart and Mind; Synchronized
Chaos; Medusa's Kitchen; Our Poetry Archive; Raven Cage
Ezine; Ariel Chart; Harvest; Vita Brevis Poetry Magazine;
Madness Muse Press (blog and anthology); The Conclusion
Magazine; Chicago Record; BlogNostics; Cordella Magazine;
Merek (The Online Literary Magazine); Lethe Literary and
Art Journal**

All poems in *If I Knew This Haunting* are all written and copyrighted by © Allison Grayhurst. Some of the early poems in the section “Pendulum” are from the paperback book *Somewhere Falling*, published in 1995 by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porceplic Book.

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Four of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015/2018, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,250 poems published in more than 485 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupine Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by *The Plowman*. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

In 2018, her book *Sight at Zero*, was listed #34 on CBC’s “Your Ultimate Canadian Poetry List”.

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst’s poems into songs, creating a full album. “River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst” released October 2017.

Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay.

Some of the places her work has appeared in include Parabola (Alone & Together print issue summer 2012); SUFI Journal (Featured Poet in Issue #95, Sacred Space); Elephant Journal; Literary Orphans; Blue Fifth Review; The American Aesthetic; The Brooklyn Voice; Five2One; Agave Magazine; JuxtaProse Literary Magazine, Drunk Monkeys; Now Then Manchester; South Florida Arts Journal; Gris-Gris; The Muse – An International Journal of Poetry, Storm Cellar, morphrog (sister publication of Frogmore Papers); New Binary Press Anthology; Straylight Literary Magazine (print); Chicago Record Magazine, The Milo Review; Foliate Oak Literary Magazine; The Antigonish Review; Dalhousie Review; The New Quarterly; Wascana Review; Poetry Nottingham International; The Cape Rock; Ayris; Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry; The Toronto Quarterly; Fogged Clarity, Existere; Boston Poetry Magazine; Decanto; White Wall Review.

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Quotes

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness*, legendary singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of ‘Wigford Rememberies’ and ‘The Abandoned’, Nightwood Editons; www.kypharness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity's authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” *Taylor Jane Green*, BA,

RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology* and *The Rise of Eros*.

“Grayhurst’s rapturous outpouring of imagery makes her poems easily enjoyable ... Like a sear the poet seeks to fathom sensual and spiritual experience through the images of a dream,” *Canadian Literature*.

“Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst,” *Blaise Wigglesworth, Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice*.

“Grayhurst’s poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original,” *Beach Holme Publishers*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.

"Biting into the clouds and bones of desire and devotion, love and grief, Allison Grayhurst basks the reader, with breathtaking eloquence, in an elixir of words. Like lace, the elegance is revealed by what isn't said. This is stunning poetry," *Angela Hryniuk*, author of 'no visual scars'.

"Allison Grayhurst is a poet whose work is characterized by startling imagery and uncompromising emotion, whose pieces have appeared in prestigious magazines. Lights, darks, colors, and passions intertwine throughout the pages of her work," *Louise E. Allin*, Literature and Language.

"When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold," *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes," *Cristina Deptula*, editor of Synchronized Chaos.

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**Surrogate Dharma, 2014, Barometric Pressures Author Series,
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**Four chapbooks published under the pseudonym of Jocelyn
Kain:**

Jumana, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 0-929002-36-9

Perfect Love, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 0-929002-66-0

Before the Dawn, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 0-929002-11-3

Joshua's Shoulder, 1989, The Plowman; ISBN: 1-55072-025-2

"Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," Beach Holme Publishers.

"Grayhurst's rapturous outpouring of imagery makes her poems easily enjoyable ... Like a sear the poet seeks to fathom sensual and spiritual experience through the images of a dream." Canadian Literature.

Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Five times nominated for "Best of the Net", 2015/2017/2018, she has over 1250 poems published in over 485 international journals and anthologies. She has 21 published books of poetry, six collections and six chapbooks. She lives in Toronto with her family. She is a vegan. She also sculpts, working with clay.

